



Promising Partnerships Practices

2024

A collection of initiatives from districts and schools
about working with families and community partners
for student learning

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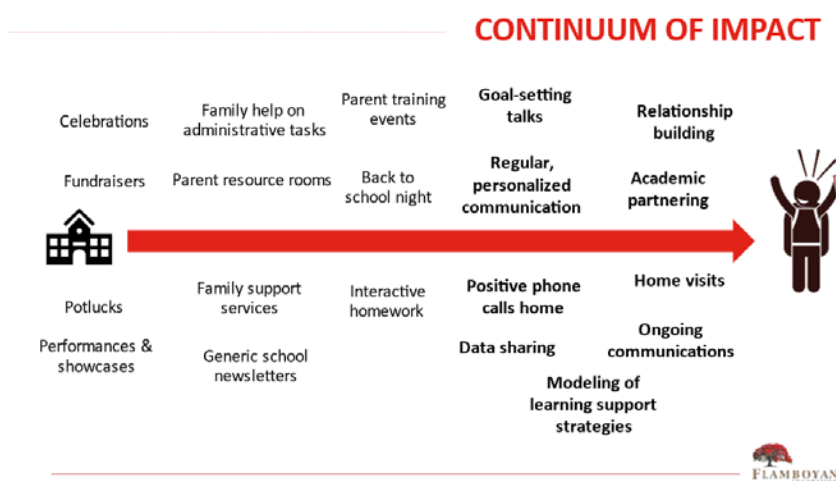
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Introduction

The State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) are pleased to share this 10th annual collection of *Promising Partnership Practices*. The purpose of this publication is for schools, districts, and other educational organizations in Colorado to highlight how they partner with families and the community for student success.

Over 55 years of research indicate that students are more likely to succeed both academically and behaviorally when schools, families, and communities work together. This publication includes almost 50 practices categorized by the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2022) and Colorado’s Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) Framework (CDE, 2020).

Several themes emerged in this year’s compilation of practices. The most prevalent themes were collaborating with the community and building capacity of staff and families. Many practices also focused on supporting newcomer families. Like last year, most practices fall along the “high impact” side of the FSCP continuum.



A final theme to highlight is that almost every school-level practice in this publication is situated in a district that has identified a FSCP leader to guide and sustain partnership work. And each of those district leaders actively participates in supports offered by the Office of Family, School, and Community Partnerships at CDE. This demonstrates the importance of having a [statewide systemic support structure](#) that cultivates partnerships leading to positive student outcomes (Epstein and Boone, 2022).

We look forward to highlighting more practices each year and to improving outcomes for students through family, school, and community partnering.

Back to School Night in Spanish

Louisville Elementary School

Louisville, CO

The introduction of an additional Back to School Night specifically tailored for Spanish-speaking parents has been instrumental in promoting equity and inclusivity at Louisville Elementary School. By providing a place for Spanish-speaking parents to engage with teachers, administrators, and other parents in their native language,



Louisville Elementary has tried to bridge linguistic barriers and ensure that all parents have equal access to important information about their child's education. This initiative not only seems to foster a sense of belonging and empowerment among Spanish-speaking families, but it also demonstrates the commitment to honoring and valuing the diversity within the school community. Because of this one event, parents seem to better understand who they can talk to in the school, how they can communicate things, and recognize that school leadership supports strong home-school collaboration.

The initiation of an additional Back to School Night for Spanish-speaking parents came from the proactive leadership of the Families and Educators Together (FET) committee chair. Recognizing the challenges that Spanish-speaking parents face in fully participating in school events, the committee garnered support from stakeholders and advocated for the necessary resources and logistical support to make the Back to School Night a reality.

This practice began with the intent of developing stronger relationships between families and educators from the start. The FET committee decided to hold an informal gathering that included parents, children, and food (which is essential to building community). After a brief icebreaker, everyone received a calendar for all the important dates for the year, upcoming FET meetings, and events deemed urgent for parents to know throughout the school year. This information also included what to do on the first day of school, what to do for Meet and Greet with the teacher, and what to do for Back to School Night. After a tour of the school building, parents had time to participate in small group conversations to ask questions that they had about the school and FET meetings.

Families who participated in the Back to School Night in Spanish shared that they felt like for the first time they were included and could speak up for themselves. In addition, student ACCESS scores greatly improved and Louisville Elementary ended up being the number two school in the district for ACCESS. Parents shared, “Apreciamos mucho toda la ayuda que nos han brindado,” (We greatly appreciate all the help you have given us) and “Antes no participabamos, pero ahora tenemos la confianza de hablar y compartir” (Before we did not participate, but now we have the confidence to speak and share).

The event coordinators have several pieces of advice for those hoping to conduct a similar event. First, speak with Spanish-speaking parents to understand their frustrations and needs. Next, work together and solicit help from teachers and administrators. Third, focus on personalizing the event by making it about things that are important to Spanish-speaking parents. Finally, continue to get feedback from parents about what is helpful along the way, and keep an open mind for things they have to say.

Community Helpers in Afterschool Programs

Edwards Elementary School

Edwards, CO

The latest evolution in YouthPower365's PwrHrs Afterschool programming in Eagle County schools has led to the development of project-based learning. The goal of this new programming was for the afterschool program students to be exposed to new experiences and community helpers (aside from the traditional ones of first responders), hear perspectives and experiences from different community members, and be able to participate in the presentations. Community Helpers included painters, plumbers, electricians, and custodians.

The "Community Helper" program was piloted at Edwards Elementary School, where the [YouthPower365](#) (YP365) Elementary Program Administrator knew many of the families and supported their participation as Community Helpers. "It was incredible the response from the community members, how engaged they were. Everyone wanted to come and just present to the students about the work that they do."

The Edwards Elementary Afterschool teachers and site coordinators met with the YP365 program administrator to plan the goals, expectations, roles, and parameters for the "Community Helpers" program. The YP365 program administrator then reached out to families to dialogue with them about the program. It was important to share the idea and its importance and to listen to what each Community Helper needed to make their experience comfortable and successful. Once there was commitment from a community helper, it was plugged into the afterschool program schedule. This allowed teachers to talk to their students prior to the event. It was noted that after meeting and hearing about the work of the elementary school custodian, the students made the effort to greet her and do their part in keeping the school and classrooms clean.



Each Community Helper ended their session with questions to both assess learning and deepen the student's understanding. The team prevented challenges by holding conversations with the Community Helpers to ensure that they felt welcomed, supported, and part of the team. It is recommended that the connector, who in this experience was the YP365 program administrator, needs to be present during the "Community Helper" program. Being present and walking alongside the Community Helper builds confidence and motivation.

A classroom teacher, who was also an after-school instructor, shared, "The community presenters were all natural teachers who share their community professions with pride and engaging, hands-on presentations. This allowed students to have a personal awareness and appreciation of their community members while also having invaluable exposure to educational and future career pathways. The students demonstrated appreciation and understanding through a unique experience."

Establishing The Family Center

Campbell Early Learning Center

Arvada, CO



Campbell Early Learning Center is a public preschool that completed its first year of operation in 2024. Before opening its doors, Campbell solidified its family engagement goals by establishing The Family Center within the school building and hiring a dedicated Family Engagement Liaison. Campbell Early Learning Center effectively leveraged The Family Center as an educational asset in the lives of its families by ensuring programming was tailored to their needs. The Family Center's mission and philosophy has been to provide a communal space where families can access classroom learning aligned to events and programming, and district and community resources.

Purposeful language and signage reinforced the idea that The Family Center belongs to the community. This welcoming space and subsequent programming were coordinated by a Family Engagement Liaison.

Throughout the year, The Family Center leaned on community partnerships. This type of partnership fell into two categories. Community support included donations and hosting fundraisers, while community collaboration involved partnerships that aligned with educational standards. This past year, Jovial Concepts, a local nursery and construction company, supported Campbell by sponsoring the construction of a Teaching Garden. This partnership allowed Campbell Early Learning to have the unique opportunity to integrate the project into the school's educational structure. Because of this partnership with Jovial Concepts, The Family Center collaborated with The Arvada Gardener's club, who provided vegetable plants that students then planted in the Teaching Garden. Classrooms will work together to maintain their classroom plot and will work as a team to harvest their crops.

The Teaching Garden was an asset to each teacher's lesson plans. Teachers were encouraged to participate in programming choices and communicate the educational support needs of the students in their classrooms to The Family Center. Collaborating with the PTA fostered stronger community engagement and encouraged more families to participate in both PTA and The Family Center programming. The 6 National PTA Standards were posted in The Family Center to highlight what the relationship between the PTA, school, and The Family Center is and how all three entities work as a team for the betterment of students' educational goals.

Campbell Early Learning documented significant, successful growth within the school community from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Family engagement data shows Campbell Early Learning in the top percentile. The success of Campbell's approach with The Family Center highlights the importance of ongoing family engagement as an evolving educational strategy, instead of simply a one-time goal.

Homemade Blanket Night

Moffat PK-12 School

Moffat, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

One of the goals at Moffat Consolidated School District #2 is to focus on building trusting relationships with families and community members. Located in the rural San Luis Valley, where temperatures drop to 0 degrees when the sun goes down around 4:00pm in the winter, Moffat PK-12 is a small school of 104 students. Staff and families in the school recognized the need for extra warmth over the cold winter nights. Moffat families are unique in the fact that they mostly use woodstoves or different means for heat. During the 2023 Thanksgiving holiday season, Moffat gathered families for a night to create their own homemade blankets to snuggle under together for the long break and hopefully create a school tradition. It also helped build trust amongst the participants by making the school building feel like a safe and welcoming place for all.

Making a blanket as a family was a meaningful bonding experience among the family members, as well as all the staff that volunteered to participate and run the blanket night. Not only were families working together on cutting, tying, and measuring their blankets, they got to sit and chat with other community partners, family members, and district staff, all of whom tied ends of blankets and cut fabric with the families.

Approximately 20 families attended. This event provided an opportunity to spend quality time together, share stories, and meet other people in the community. Working on a shared project can provide emotional support during challenging times. It offered a safe space for family members to open up, express themselves, and provide comfort and encouragement to one another. Participating families enjoyed this event and asked Moffat PK-12 to host it again, noting that the blankets were ideal for chilly football games.



Securing space and supplies proved to be the greatest challenge. Advice offered to schools hoping to host a blanket making night is to first make sure there is a large enough space for all who want to participate. Next, order the right amount of blanket material and pre-cut the fabric for the same equal length of material per family. Encourage teamwork and communication among the family members and provide multiple patterns of materials, sharp scissors, and yardsticks. Finally, Moffatt staff recommend making sure there are enough school staff to help with knotting the blankets.

Latino Holiday Potluck Celebration

Horizon Community Middle School

Aurora, CO



The Latino Holiday Potluck Celebration at Horizon Community Middle School was an event designed to honor and celebrate the diverse Latino traditions represented within the student body. This event served as a platform for students and their families to share their rich cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride and belonging within the school community. By encouraging the sharing of traditional foods, stories, and customs, the event aimed to enhance cultural awareness and appreciation among all students and staff.

Family engagement is a cornerstone of the potluck, with families invited to prepare traditional dishes and create posters highlighting important cultural traditions from their countries of origin. These posters often included photos, historical context, and personal anecdotes, providing a deeper understanding of each family's unique heritage. Parents and students played an active role in the celebration, sharing what they love about their culture and what traditions they are proud to pass down to future generations. This not only helped to strengthen their sense of cultural identity, but also allowed them to educate their peers about the rich diversity within the Latino community. The communal meal, featuring a diverse array of traditional foods, allowed participants to experience and appreciate the culinary diversity of Latino cultures.

Overall, the Latino Holiday Potluck Celebration had a profound impact on the school community. It strengthened cultural pride among Latino students and their families while promoting mutual respect and understanding among the broader student body and staff. By bringing together different cultures in a spirit of celebration and learning, the event fostered stronger community bonds and highlighted the importance of diversity and inclusion within the school.

My Culture

Discovery High School

Colorado Springs, CO

Discovery High School is the alternative high school for Widefield School District 3. At Discovery, they want to help students find success and connectivity through exposure. One way they accomplished this was through a six-week unit called My Culture. Students had the opportunity to explore and compare their cultures based on personal experiences while focused on differences such as socioeconomics, religion, finances, ability, and demographics.

The planning and implementation of this practice came from the entire school staff and focused on implementing cross-cultural aspects into each subject matter. The teachers co-planned and implemented culture-specific lessons into their instruction to allow students to gain perspective when examining other cultures. Each teacher participated in planning off-site field experiences for students to gain real-world exposure to different cultures. This required collaboration with multiple community organizations (mosques, catholic churches, senior living centers, guest speakers, etc.) to allow students and staff to engage and learn about their cultures.

Each student celebrated their diversity by studying and creating multiple projects to show who they are through their culture. One such project was the study of real games played by different cultures. Students could adapt a game to their culture and essentially make up a new game, including new rules, with challenges that address some of the differences studied in the associated culture. During the unit on religions, students and staff visited different religious locations, as well as listened to speakers that engaged them in an inquiry-based journey through the religion. These field experiences lent themselves to deep discussion because they provided the perspective of the community being served.

For the final project, students were intentionally grouped based on various backgrounds and groups they were in during the exploration phase of this unit. The students were then challenged to study a specific group and be able to present on that group's culture. The culminating projects were a walking museum and individual presentations that celebrated culture and diversity. Parents, community members, and school board personnel were all invited to experience the journey that was My Culture.



The practice was evaluated on multiple aspects. The evaluation process included peer review and feedback, teacher review and feedback, and administrative review and feedback. Students had the opportunity to revise their projects, as well as make tweaks prior to the final presentations. Stakeholders were provided with a rubric and through these were able to celebrate and give positive feedback to the students about their cultural presentations.

To replicate this project, take time to understand the cultures students are examining and be deliberate about the expectation of what students do. It would have been more effective to have students working on their final projects from the very beginning. However, Discovery High School would not change the experience the students had when examining their own culture and learning about others.

Newcomer Academy and Pantry

Holly Hills/Ridge Elementary School

Denver, CO

The goal of the Newcomer Academy and Pantry is to reinforce the relationship between the school and the community by simplifying the educational system for newcomer families. This encourages families to be involved and help their children reach their goals. As a result of the Newcomer Academy and Pantry, newcomer families feel welcomed and supported.



Many people were involved in the planning and implementation of the practice. The administration, principal and assistant principal, provided the location for the Newcomer Academy and Pantry. Ms. Leslie Navarro and her team provided [HopSkipDrive](#) to students facing housing issues and needing transportation to school. The team also sent food, clothing, and hygiene products to families in need. Holly Hills' staff supported the pantry by donating coats for all newcomers, winter gear, snacks, and other clothing.

The Newcomer Academy targets families' and students' needs by helping them fill out their parent forms and free and reduced lunch applications and explaining the consequences of being out of school without any reason. It also motivated families to participate in school cultural events and P.A.S.S. (Partnership for Academically Successful Students) meetings by listening to their concerns and being the bridge between the school and families.

The practice was recognized by the district. The superintendent visited the school and honored the community liaison and the cultural liaison with a Hero Prize, in recognition of all their hard work in coordinating the Newcomer Academy and Pantry. Many challenges were overcome because of the coordinators in charge of the practice being Spanish speakers. They were able to communicate and build relationships with families and students.

The advice they would give to someone wanting to replicate the practice is to work from the heart, be reliable, put yourself in other people's shoes, and be patient with students and families. Be generous with your time, do your work with love and a smile, and reassure newcomer families that they are a part of your community.

Night Art for Hispanic Families

Wellington Middle-High School

Wellington, CO

Wellington Middle-High School, nestled within the Poudre School District (PSD), is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment where all students and families feel welcomed and supported. Understanding the importance of cultural representation and engagement, the school initiated the practice of Night Art for Hispanic Families. This initiative aimed to celebrate Hispanic culture while creating meaningful connections between the school and the Hispanic community it serves.

The planning and implementation of Night Art for Hispanic Families involved a collaborative effort between school administrators, teachers, students, and families of the local Hispanic community. Recognizing the significance of authentic representation, the planning team included Hispanic parents to ensure cultural authenticity and relevance.



Night Art for Hispanic Families was a vibrant event that showcased various forms of Hispanic art, including traditions, music, visual arts, and culinary delights. The practice was designed not only to celebrate Hispanic culture but also to promote family engagement and community partnerships. By creating a welcoming and culturally rich environment, the event aimed to strengthen relationships between the school and Hispanic families, ultimately contributing to positive student outcomes and a more inclusive school climate.

Evaluation of the practice involved gathering feedback from participants through surveys and informal discussions. While the overall feedback was positive, challenges were encountered during implementation, including logistical issues and the need for greater outreach to ensure maximum participation from the Hispanic families. Despite these challenges, the event provided valuable insights for future iterations and highlighted the importance of ongoing communication and collaboration with Wellington's Hispanic families.

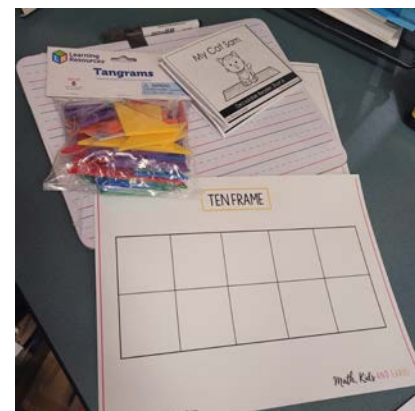
For those looking to replicate the practice, the key advice is to prioritize authentic engagement with the Hispanic families from the planning stages. As one participant noted, "Involving families in the planning process ensures that the event truly reflects our culture and values." Additionally, effective communication and logistical planning are essential for a successful event. By embracing diversity and celebrating cultural heritage, Night Art for Hispanic Families exemplifies the power of community-driven initiatives in promoting inclusivity and student success.

Welcome Packet Initiative

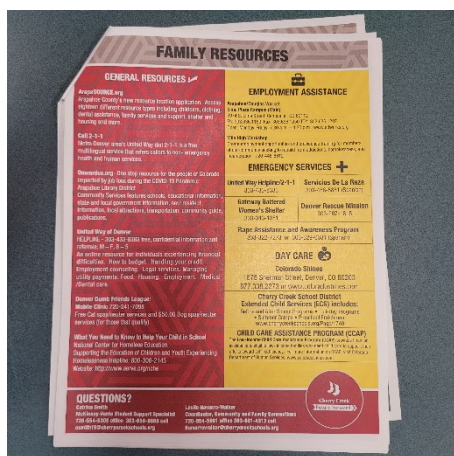
Village East Elementary School

Aurora, CO

Like many schools across Colorado, Village East Elementary School enrolled many newcomer students in the 2023-24 school year. The Welcome Packet Initiative not only supported newcomer families, but also families and students already in the school and experiencing hardship. With all of these families in mind, one kindergarten teacher, Ms. Dani Bettis, reached out to the community liaison with an idea to create a packet of materials that provided a starting point for many to receive the assistance they needed. The goal was to create welcome packets with English Language Services and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) information. Examples of materials in the packets included:



- A welcome letter with access to East Village's family survey;
- Information on community resources including: STRIDE Community Health Center, English classes, clothing and food banks, etc;
- A white dry erase board with marker;
- Consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) pattern books and decodable readers;
- Stories and books specific of culture and heritage;
- A laminated ten frame sheet to practice math skills;
- Tangrams (for younger kids) for abstract thinking and creativity; and
- SEL materials including best practices for overstimulation/stress/anger.



The Community Liaison met with the newcomer families on the student's first day of school, took them to class, and facilitated an exchange of information between the teacher and family. Students received a backpack with school supplies. These interactions helped to identify students and families that needed assistance. While this has only been in practice since February 2024, teachers and parents have said the Welcome Packet Initiative has made things much smoother. As Village East continues to provide the welcome packet, the paraprofessionals who interact with students daily will be more involved and report back with how those handoffs went.

As with all programs that offer support to the community, each school that implements it needs dedicated staff to conduct follow ups and be willing to spend the time with the students and their families.

Adult English and Spanish Classes

Maplewood Elementary School

Greeley, CO



At Maplewood Elementary School, the goal of the Adult English and Spanish classes was to bring families together and support their communication with one another, as well as with staff.

Terra Peña, Maplewood's Parent & Family Advocate; Sarah Mireles, a CLD teacher; Debbie Wellborn, a CLD teacher; and Laura Sneesby, a 4th grade teacher and 21st Century lead, were the main implementers of the Adult English and Spanish classes. The team surveyed families to gauge interest in English classes for the 23-24 school year. Terra recruited families for both English and

Spanish classes. She kept in contact with all families participating in classes and followed up with them if they missed a class. Sarah and Debbie both developed curriculum for the classes and taught the English classes. Laura brought students and families together to support family activities with adult learners. Ramon Reyes, Maplewood's principal, played an important role with programming. He provided support in regular meetings, provided space and materials, and participated in the end-of-year recognition event for participants.

With more interest from families than expected, the group decided to provide English classes on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Over 35 adult learners attended the 2-hour class. Participants engaged in beginner conversational English phrases. The instructors were flexible with the curriculum, meeting the needs and requests of the students. Spanish classes ran simultaneously with English classes on Tuesday nights. Most participants in the Spanish classes were school staff members, along with some families that wanted to learn Spanish. In the last 20 minutes of Tuesday's classes, both Spanish and English classes came together to practice their language skills.

The main challenges were how to create an environment for both learning groups to work together, as well as the time of year classes were offered. The group strategically planned classes during the Fall of 2023 and rolled out class opportunities in January. The classes ended in April because many families had more work opportunities with daylight savings time.

The impact on families was more confidence to walk into the school to support their child's learning, more attempted communication between families and staff, and a slight increase in parent-teacher conferences. Spanish class participants stated they were excited to connect with families in the English class. Conversations began to happen during drop-off and pick-up, which normally didn't happen because of the language difference. Participants said they felt "safe" to try and converse with a Spanish-speaking family in the English class knowing that both were learning a new language. English class participants wanted more classes. English class participants also said they were more comfortable conversing with staff members in the building. The students enjoyed having the adults in the building learning alongside them.

To replicate this practice, the most important thing is to have a good team that works well together and has the same goal for the school community.



Cimarron Middle School’s communication system is proactive, focusing on building positive relationships to support student growth and achievement. The school’s communication systems and protocols support staff in implementing effective communication practices. This communication starts with the classroom teachers and the relationships built between students, teachers, and families. At the start of the school year, Cimarron’s school leadership

team provided professional development for teachers specifically focused on [communication and partnering with families](#). As seen in this [Cimarron Connected video](#), the team set the stage for building relationships and connecting with kids. In addition to professional learning, the school leadership team offered coaching and support for teachers, often before, during, and after parent phone calls. Providing scripts and expectations for positive phone calls and parent-teacher conferences supported the systemic implementation of these high-yield strategies.

The transition to middle school can be a big change, but Cimarron offered coffee talks to help facilitate a smoother transition for students and parents. They value parent feedback, as it helped alleviate some of the stress around this transition. One great aspect of the coffee talks was when students gave a tour from their perspective, allowing parents to ask them questions. Cimarron staff pay special attention to communicating with all students and families. For example, an ELD breakfast mirrored the coffee talk process and involved all ELD teachers from the feeder school to support the students and families.

The administrative team models relationship-building and ongoing communication through weekly staff newsletters and bi-weekly family newsletters. [The January staff newsletter](#) reminded teachers, “As the days are cold and we are not able to get outside this quarter, things might get tough at times. Lean into the relationships that you have developed to foster the environment that you want in our classrooms and school.” [Bi-weekly family newsletters](#) provide regular, ongoing communication using a platform that offers translations in multiple languages, facilitating access to information and opportunities that support student success. Cimarron staff have found that highlighting sections, bolding words, and bullet points have helped readers hone in on specific areas of each communication.

Cimarron’s commitment to effective communication has improved student outcomes and fostered a positive work environment, leading to high staff retention rates.

Launch to Middle School

Jeffco Public Schools

Golden, CO

The “Launch to Middle School” event was an effort that addressed Arvada families with students entering middle school for the 24-25 school year. The goal of this event was to provide training for families on how to use the Infinite Campus platform, to monitor their student’s performance in middle school, and introduce Google Classroom as an additional tool for grade check-ins and communication with teachers.

“Launch to Middle School” was planned by the Family Engagement Liaisons from Swanson, Secrest, Lawrence, Hackberry Hill elementary schools, Arvada K-8, and North Arvada Middle School. Leaders from Jeffco Public School’s Department of Federal Programs and staff from North Arvada Middle School also contributed. The Family Engagement Liaisons leveraged their connections and relationships with their elementary school families to communicate the importance of the event and encourage them to attend. District leaders created the Infinite Campus Training slide deck to demonstrate an overview of Infinite Campus and Google Classroom. Interpreters provided services to ELL and ASL families, so they had access to the information.



“Launch to Middle School” took place at North Arvada Middle school on the same day that all Arvada 5th graders visited the building. The presentation illustrated the process of logging into Infinite Campus and showed step-by-step instructions of how to view the many facets of the platform. The school counselor and registrar outlined the grading policies and academic expectations at North Arvada Middle School. This, paired with the tools to access real-time information, demystified school systems and gave families the ability to address why students may be missing assignments. Additionally, families were taught how to watch for trends in grades, attendance, and communicate with teachers and administrators about where their students may need extra support.

One of the challenges was not having the slide presentation available in Spanish, but it has since been translated for future presentations to meet the needs of all attendees. Evaluation of the presentation was conducted through an exit ticket and was provided in both English and Spanish. Families answered these questions: Did this workshop increase your understanding of the tools needed to support your student home? Did you feel this workshop was helpful for you? What would make this workshop better? Which part was most useful - Q&A, tour of the school, or accessing the online tools?

One attendee was not new to Infinite Campus, Google Classroom, or middle school policies, but still stated, “it was very informative, and as someone who already uses it, it cleared up some things.” Another response was satisfied with their new ability to access “online tools and what is expected next year.” One evaluator shared they were “impressed with the inclusivity of the workshop.” This event was highly rated by attendees and was successful in achieving the initial goal.

Positive Postcards

Fairview High School

Boulder, CO

Fairview High School's mission is to create a culture of belonging that supports all students. The Positive Postcards practice emphasized Fairview's commitment to see all students through a positive lens. The goal was that all students receive a personalized handwritten note from school staff. The Positive Postcards communicated the noteworthy things staff noticed, appreciated, and valued about each student. These were one of the concrete ways Fairview staff deliberately messaged their appreciation for students and who they are as individuals. This intentional practice contributed to the goal of creating a culture of belonging.

The MTSS team at Fairview is composed of school administrators, counselors, and specialists (including the attendance dean, engagement specialist, study hall teacher, special education staff, gifted and talented advisor, and community liaison). The team meets weekly to review student progress and implement support. This year, they also met monthly with all teachers and staff to hold student support meetings. They utilized some of the time in the professional development calendar to write positive postcards home.



The school community liaison, Rupali Hofmann, spearheaded the integration of writing positive postcards into a school wide practice as a way to personalize connection to all students. This sometimes felt like a daunting task at a large, comprehensive high school, and staff found that taking time to write postcards is one way to show care and connection to all students and families across the system. Fairview High School was intentional with messaging home as they did not wish to always communicate about a deficit, problem, or concern. Instead, they deliberately acknowledged positives about all students. The goal was to write 1,840 postcards so each student would receive one from a teacher or staff member. This directly impacted the culture of belonging as staff heard back from students once they received them. One student said, "It made my day," and another, "I felt like I was valued at Fairview".

During professional development and staff meetings, a table was set up for staff to write notes. Staff were also encouraged to take additional notecards to write to more students outside of the professional development time. After the cards were written, the Community Liaison addressed them and mailed them out. The challenges were ensuring 1,840 students receive a card. Next year they may wish to start with the incoming 9th graders to ensure all freshmen receive a Positive Postcard by the end of the year.

For schools looking to replicate this practice, Fairview staff recommend starting the practice by presenting it at the beginning of the year to the whole staff and having them be a part of the vision to help each student know they belong. Fairview leaders provided pre-printed address labels and offered to mail the postcards, which made it easier for staff who wrote the Positive Postcards. Finally, as students provide feedback, consider highlighting the feedback in a newsletter for all staff to see the full circle of appreciation.

Castle View High School in Douglas County, Colorado created a program called ¡Échale Ganas! aimed at educating students and parents on school processes and post-secondary readiness. Staff at the school noticed that migrant students showed low to no motivation to complete high school due to their migratory status. These students expressed that they would like to go to college or pursue post-secondary options but didn't know how to pay for it or if they could even attend. To meet these needs, ¡Échale Ganas! was born.

¡Échale Ganas! was created by the cultural liaison and the Spanish teacher, with collaboration from administrators and counselors at Castle View High School. The cultural liaison conducted research on existing programs and the Spanish teacher focused on approaching academics from a parental lens. The ¡Échale Ganas! program is conducted entirely in Spanish, with interpretation when needed. The goal is to create a welcoming environment where parents and students feel they can ask questions.

Each session is divided into various topics that will help educate families. Guest speakers are brought in to discuss school processes, such as what it means to take an AP class, what the requirements are for high school graduation, and the beginning steps of college payment options. Research was conducted in all these areas to ensure that the information provided to families and students is current and correct.

Each topic is paired with an activity parents are encouraged to complete with their students, as well as an opportunity to ask the speakers questions. There is also a moment called "consejos" when parents can either give advice to other parents and students or students can give advice to their parents or other students. In one of the meetings of ¡Échale Ganas! a panel of Castle View alumni were invited to share their post-secondary experiences. At another meeting, participants heard from a college admissions counselor who had experience working with DACA and undocumented students.



As a result of this work, parents are willing to ask questions and seek guidance on available resources. Session topics have also included the [Colorado ASCENT program](#) and the benefits of the [ASSET legislation](#). Students have been able to access these resources, and several have been accepted into these different programs.

Since the practice is new, there were several logistical challenges, such as what times would be most beneficial for families, if dinner could be provided, and how to locate resources. The team decided to offer a pizza dinner with gluten free options for families as well as scheduling meetings from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm as this is after work for many of the families. No formal evaluation has been conducted; however, attendance as well as returning participants indicated success.

There are some considerations that should be thought through when replicating this practice. The needs of the audience must be considered. What does the work week look like for families? Is dinner going to be provided? If so, what culturally responsive dinners can be provided? Tap into the parent leaders at the school. Consider who would be appropriate guest speakers and elevate the parent voice through "consejos." In that same vein of thought, choose topics based on feedback from the participants.

“Every Day Matters” Attendance Campaign

Alamosa School District

Alamosa, CO

In utilizing data-based problem solving and decision making, the Alamosa School District decided to embark on an intentional "Every Day Matters" community-wide attendance campaign. The Every Day Matters Campaign is a crucial reminder to students and families of the importance of attending school daily. With the change to a 4-day school week, attendance is even more imperative, as the loss of an instructional day has compounded into more instructional time that is lost. Attendance is critical for student success.

Many people were involved in launching this campaign: administration, the multi-tiered system of supports team, the family engagement team, all district staff, and many community partners, as well as a local media company, Zepol Media.

The team came up with the intentional name, Every Day Matters, and began to grow the attendance campaign from there. The media company designed the attendance campaign logo, as well as stickers to hand out and posters to display in the five school buildings and throughout the Alamosa community. The team utilized language equity, so all the design items are in English as well as Spanish. The district's restorative practices, in conjunction with its attendance programming process and Voice Visits program, all align to support the campaign.

The district-wide Voice Visits program allows all Alamosa School District staff to meet with families in a convenient and comfortable location to discuss and problem solve their attendance challenges, as well as any other challenges they may be facing. It may be something as simple as needing the phone number to the bus barn to get their student signed up for a bus route for transportation. These visits come with a stipend, funded through a grant, if a staff member conducts them after contract hours. Alamosa School District also offers restorative attendance mediation meetings to support families with any and all challenges.



All of the efforts entailed intentional data collection. The three big buckets of data that were evaluated were attendance, academics, and behavior incidents. Team members quickly began to see the needles move in the desired direction for improvement in all three areas. In School Year 2022-23, the district attendance rate was 92%, as compared to the state average of 90.8%. This year, internal measures showed a district attendance rate of 93%. In 2022-23 the truancy rate was 2% as compared to 3.5% statewide. The chronically absent rate was 30.5% as compared to 31.1% statewide.

As the school district team reflected on the efforts and results of the attendance campaign, they realized that getting a group of champions together to lead the work was crucial. It made moving this effort in a positive direction much more successful. Utilizing the multi-tiered system of supports framework has made this effort sustainable.

Family Learning Walk

Arrowhead Elementary School

Aurora, CO

At Arrowhead Elementary, the goal of hosting a Family Learning Walk was to help families understand what happens during the school day so they can best support their child. This was an opportunity for students' parents, grandparents, and guardians to participate in a tour of the school while active learning was taking place. The school staff received great feedback and families were able to observe the instructional strategies used by the school and compare how their children are being taught in 2024 to their own experience as a youth.

The Family Learning Walk consisted of three parts: a tour, classroom observations, and a teacher panel. To make this event a success, the school principal and teachers had to be on board. The principal asked Arrowhead teachers to volunteer to either be a part of a teacher panel, be a tour guide during the walk, or have an open classroom for observation while teaching students. It was very important for the teachers being observed to feel comfortable and prepared during the observations. Participants were asked not to take any photos or videos while in classrooms, maintain a “fly on the wall” behavior to ensure an authentic learning environment, avoid having conversations in classrooms, honor the privacy of students and teachers, and always stay with the tour group.



Each classroom teacher picked two families to personally invite to the event. The day began with caregivers meeting with administration to learn about the work being done at the school and get a snapshot of the school's academic data. Participants then broke into small tour groups led by staff members. Each group visited three different classrooms and the tour guide helped narrate what they were seeing and answer caregivers' questions. After the tours, they debriefed as a group, discussing what they noticed and wondered about from their observations. They then shared out with the whole group. There was also a presentation from the reading interventionist about how to support their child's literacy development at home. At the end, families were able to pose questions to a panel of 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th grade teachers, as well as the Reading Enrichment teacher. Some of the questions and concerns of the families were about classroom management approaches, how the school addresses bullying, and how teachers meet the needs of a range of students.



For many families, attending a daytime event is a challenge. The Family Learning Walk was scheduled first thing in the morning so that participants could come for the first half and leave if they needed to go to work. To include Arrowhead's multilingual families, interpreters were available if requested. To replicate this event, it is recommended a teacher of each grade level participates on the panel and a classroom observation is available for each grade level. It is also recommended to encourage family members of ethnicities represented in the school community to join by providing interpreters.

The Learning Literacy Together workshop was created as a way to provide outreach to Jeffco primary families with the purpose of building capacity in early literacy skills. It was specifically designed to be interactive and not a “sit and get” presentation. The Title I Family Engagement team designed the three-part series with the goal of building family knowledge around primary reading instruction, learning and understanding academic language, providing both modeling and interactive practice for several take-home literacy activities, and learning about the Colorado Read Act. Throughout the school year, eleven Jeffco Title I funded elementary schools participated in the three-week series.

Planning for Learning Literacy Together started at the district level with the goal being to build literacy knowledge for primary families. Once the goal was established and clear, author and former kindergarten teacher Kerry Zarlengo and Jeffco Family Engagement Coach Susie Kirvin created a three-part literacy series. It was important to build relationships between families attending, so each session started with a fun connecting activity. Family Engagement Liaisons (FEL’s) were integral to the implementation process by creating an advertising plan to invite families to participate. FEL’s personally invited families and were responsible for removing barriers such as providing childcare, so that families could participate.

This practice was designed for families to help their child become better readers by learning take home literacy activities. Families also learned literacy academic language. Each session focused on one or more of the five main components of reading - Vocabulary, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, and Comprehension. Families learned about the reading process, why young readers need to be proficient in each section of reading, and received take-home activities. Families also learned about the Colorado Read Act and why students need to make sufficient reading growth in each grade level.



Learning Literacy Together asked families to evaluate each session. FEL’s were also asked for feedback and ways to strengthen each learning session. The presenters addressed several challenges during implementation. First, by receiving feedback from families and FEL’s, the workshop was changed to create more clarity for families around the five main components of reading. Second, depending on the time of the year that the workshop was presented, content changed to reflect what students had already learned in class. Finally, with each new school presentation, observing how the adults received the information and applied their new skills required adjusting the workshop pace to meet the needs of families. Family comments included: “I really enjoyed learning the sounds of letters today. I needed a refresher!” and “Great ideas were presented to bring home and practice with my kids.”

To replicate Learning Literacy Together, several components need to be in place. Clearly state the goal of each workshop so families know what they will be learning. Learning the “why” behind giving “wait time” to families is important so that family voices are always heard. Keep in mind that “more” is not always best or productive. Listen to family feedback and be aware of what reading skills are being taught throughout the year.

At Leroy Elementary School in Northglenn, the big picture goal is to empower families to be partners in their child's education through interactive and varied ways that engage their child with reading and writing. Out of this goal came Leroy Family Literacy. While family engagement, especially opportunities focused on academics, is a school-wide effort, this event required close collaboration between the family liaison, academic interventionists, and the office manager.

Leroy Family Literacy revolved around a high-interest book series, *Pig the Pug*, that elementary students of all ages enjoy. There were a variety of activities that engaged students and families in different ways. Some of those included sight work and vocabulary giant Jenga, a photo booth with *Pig the Pug* themed props, and a ball pit students could dive into and "fetch" sight words. Families practiced how to ask their students age-



appropriate comprehension questions related to the themed book selection. The interactive nature of the activities was fun for families and students, even in grades 4 and 5. They also played a jeopardy review game, with the idea that students were able to teach their families how to support literacy at home.

The resources available around time and manpower to organize events like this are always a barrier, but one that schools typically rally together to overcome. This year, evaluation was mostly anecdotal observations and the smaller core planning team debrief. Attendance of families in grades 4 and 5 was relatively low, and so increased outreach is needed next year. Themed texts for each grade level that come from the reading curriculum, Benchmark, could also be selected, rather than just one theme. That would provide families with some additional context for what this learning looks like at school, and therefore, opportunities to support this learning at home.

The presence of a family liaison provided an additional resource in the form of a person who can help coordinate such events, but this cannot be one person's responsibility. Framing family engagement as a whole school responsibility is essential to organizing high impact opportunities that are connected to student learning, such as Leroy Family Literacy.



Malley Drive Elementary, in Adams 12, understands that the subject of math can be polarizing. As a parent/caregiver, it can be a challenge to know how to help with math learning at home. In response to this challenge, the school created Malley Math Madness, an event that empowers families as partners in their child's math education through game-based practices. The goal of this practice is to provide ways for families to engage their students with math concepts at home.

As with all family engagement efforts, a team of people is necessary to make a great, high-impact event happen. At Malley, the family liaison partnered with the principal, assistant principal, office manager, and other staff to coordinate this engagement opportunity. Malley Drive has the privilege of working with state support staff in the Transformation Network, which provided additional funds to support family engagement efforts that positioned families as partners in their child's education. A variety of board games were purchased with that funding.

Mathematical thinking is so much more than fractions and computation skills, and this event was aimed at making mathematical thinking skills visible and accessible. Board games appropriate for each grade level, including preschool, were purchased. For example, 5th graders were given Battleship. This game requires spatial reasoning, pattern identification, computation, questioning skills, and more. There is power in showing where math exists in our daily lives. By making math learning in daily life activities visible and comprehensible, families were empowered to support math learning at home.

“How many socks, on average, does our dryer “eat” each time we do laundry? Use that information to determine how many socks have been “eaten” by the dryer in your lifetime.”

This practice was evaluated by the number of families that attended, although a snow day for the following school day had already been announced, and the amount of enthusiasm with which families and children engaged with the event.

In the future, should funding not be available to purchase new games in bulk, Malley Drive will shift to focusing on other ways math concepts can be highlighted in everyday life with a low or no cost event.

Multilingual Family Night – CTE Spotlight

Englewood Schools

Englewood, CO

Multilingual Family Nights happen district-wide four times per year. The purpose of these nights is to bring together culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families into Englewood Schools to share a meal, network, and learn about programming in the district. This is in conjunction with students and families providing feedback on important district initiatives.

The goal of hosting Multilingual Family Night in one of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, specifically the Salon and Spa Academy, was to provide multilingual learner students the opportunity to explore diverse career paths while engaging their families in one of the CTE programs. This event also allows cosmetology students to showcase their skills and gain hands-on experience while helping multilingual students and their families understand the value of CTE, ultimately supporting student success and broadening career prospects for multilingual learners.

Planning for the Multilingual Family Night at the Salon and Spa Academy involved collaboration among the District Multilingual Education Coordinator, the Salon and Spa Academy Coordinator, the District Family, School, and Community Liaison, the Multilingual Family Liaison, the Director of Student Services, and three English Language Learner teachers from across the district. The logistics of scheduling, dinner, and activities were organized during planning meetings held months in advance.



Multilingual learners and their families were invited to Multilingual Family Night at the Salon and Spa Academy to receive free services from cosmetology students. This event served several key purposes: it provided practical, hands-on experience for cosmetology students, allowing them to apply their skills in a real-world setting, which is essential for their professional learning and licensing. At the same time, it introduced Multilingual families to the career and technical education (CTE) pathways available, such as cosmetology, barbering, and esthetics, expanding their awareness of the educational and career opportunities the district offers. This exposure helps highlight professional industry-accredited programs and makes them more accessible to diverse communities.

Additionally, community resource booths were set up in the cafeteria area, where dinner was served, allowing families to learn about resources such as local library programs and community health services. Overall, the event aimed to engage Multilingual families directly in the educational process, strengthen school-community ties, and promote a supportive and inclusive environment. Increased family involvement is linked to higher student motivation and achievement and fosters a more cohesive and positive school climate, contributing to overall school improvement.

At the conclusion of each Multilingual Family Night event, Englewood Schools holds a continuous improvement discussion to evaluate the evening. They also gather feedback from families and Salon and Spa Academy teachers to enhance future events. Over the past few years, they have addressed challenges related to scheduling numerous appointments and developed a system that better serves both the cosmetology students and the families receiving services.

If someone wants to replicate this practice, start by exploring the CTE programs available in their schools that they want families to learn more about. The next step is to collaborate with the leaders of these programs. They are likely eager to showcase the hard work and passion invested in these programs while giving students and families insight into the educational activities happening in these classrooms.

PBIS Family Night

Namaqua Elementary School

Loveland, CO

Namaqua Elementary School staff recently revamped its PBIS and Social Emotional Learning systems to include families as part of the process. They created a family night where staff led stations to teach families the strategies used at the school and how families could use these same strategies at home. The goal was to build a partnership with families and provide them with resources to support their child's social emotional needs.

The entire school staff, PBIS team, and PTA joined together to plan, create, and implement the Family Night. Families were invited to the family night to participate in hands-on activities that focused on family growth with social emotional needs. Namaqua Elementary's PTA provided dinner for everyone who attended. There were a variety of activities for families to participate in throughout the night. Families were able to make a mindfulness jar, make their own PBIS Matrix for home, create a talking piece to use for family circle time, see what a cozy corner might look like, and get ideas for what incentives to use at home. The school provided a photo booth for families and a room where they could do yoga. As families participated in the evening, students received stamps on their game board. When they completed their game board, they received a ticket to put in a drawing for a prize. Families also completed a survey to provide feedback about the evening. When the survey was completed, they received another ticket for the prize drawing. All prizes were activities for families to participate in together such as bowling, laser tag, dinner gift card, movie passes, museum passes, etc.

Sixty families provided feedback via the survey. Every family that participated in the evening loved it. They shared what activity they felt would be the most beneficial for use at home. Families loved the evening so much, they asked to have events like this more often.

To replicate the PBIS Family Night, plan with plenty of time to accomplish all of the tasks. Also, give families plenty of notice. Make the event your own and connect it to your school, students, families, and culture.



Post Secondary Preparation Night

Vantage Point High School

Northglenn, CO



As an alternative campus, Vantage Point Campus (VPC) staff in Adams 12 know the importance and value of ensuring students and families understand their options after graduation. The goal of the Post Secondary Preparation Night was to provide students and families with options and information, as well as help applying for FAFSA/CAFSA. Graduation is, of course, a driving goal for all the work the district does, but VPC goes beyond that goal by

providing opportunities such as this one. It empowered students with the knowledge and tools to pursue whatever path they determine is best for their future.

The Family Outreach Liaison coordinated with school staff to host this event. This included contacting community partners that specialize in post-secondary work, including local community colleges, to request their attendance at this event. This represents their belief that this is the work of a community, not just one school.

The Post Secondary Preparation Night was hosted after school hours as that was the best time to engage with families. By providing access to post-secondary options, information, and financial assistance application help, VPC supported student success, built trusting relationships with parents, and moved towards families' goal of setting their students up to thrive after their departure from Vantage Point.

As with any family engagement practice, getting the communication frequency and timing just right was a challenge. Additionally, coordinating after school events is tough because they often require staff to stay after hours to support. In the future, VPC is considering hosting this event at a different time and including more community partners who can assist with this work.

The turnout for this event was 14 families, which may sound like very few, but trying new things requires a growth mindset and a willingness to see the wins. An invitation to all is an invitation to none, so be thoughtful about who is invited and how.

RISE – Partnering for Student Success

Little Elementary School

Arvada, CO



RISE at Little Elementary in Arvada was designed for families to see how their students are learning and to make a connection to the curriculum being taught in the classroom. RISE is a one-hour meeting where families learn together in their child's classroom and walk away with take-home academic activities. The event was a great way for families to connect, get a window into the classroom, and understand how to support their child's academic growth.

Little's Family Engagement Liaison worked closely with the Title I RISE coordinator to plan and implement RISE. They met regularly beginning two months out from the planned RISE night to complete all tasks involved in presenting RISE to families. This planning included booking dinner, contacting and scheduling child enrichment activities for students, meeting with teachers to develop and practice their slides and activities, scheduling school staff to work the night of RISE, and ordering and organizing supplies. They developed a [planning template](#) that helped keep tasks manageable.

On the night of RISE adults gathered in their student's classrooms while students attended a child enrichment program provided by a trusted community partner. Families got to know each other through icebreakers, then teachers modeled a classroom lesson for families to see how the lesson is taught to students. This gave families tools to further their student's learning at home. All materials presented, including the take-home activities, were translated into families' preferred languages. There were also staff from the district's Translation and Interpretation Department present at RISE to interpret in real time. Afterwards, adults, students, staff, and community partners joined together in the school cafeteria for dinner provided by Little.

Attendees were provided with a Family Feedback Survey in their preferred language. These were collected at the end of the night. Families also emailed feedback directly to the Principal or Family Engagement Liaison. One challenge was staying within budget to feed over 400 people. Another was ensuring adults knew what to expect during RISE night and so staff developed a [brochure](#) titled, "A Families Guide to RISE." The family engagement liaison, the district RISE coordinator, and the school principal met after RISE to debrief where to elevate celebrations and make needed adjustments.

Anyone wanting to replicate the practice may contact Susie Kirvin in Jeffco's Title I Department. Be sure to request and confirm, well in advance, translation of all materials and interpretation services to ensure all families are given the chance to participate. Build time in the workday to regularly make sure planning deadlines are being met.

After attending RISE, one parent shared, "I got to see the actual lesson that teachers are teaching. I got to learn the strategies. And then I got to go home and reinforce them with my child. It was beautiful."



SOAR Behavior System

Sierra Middle School

Parker, CO



Sierra Middle School's SOAR Behavior System's power lies in its clear and consistent expectations for every student, which are based on the foundational practices of positive relationship-building and culturally responsive approaches within the Douglas County School District's Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Supports (IMTSS) framework.

The [SOAR system](#) is built on the principles of safety, opportunity, accountability, and respect. It was developed collaboratively by the school leadership team, considering input from families, students, and staff to ensure that all stakeholders' voices are heard and valued. The SOAR system is part of the larger IMTSS system's Academic, Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Wellness layered supports. Visibility and communication are prioritized through clear signage, targeted teaching sessions, and consistent language that reinforces behavioral expectations.

The SOAR behavior system focuses on the idea of trusted adults, which is a proven method for increasing student motivation, self-efficacy, and academic achievement. Each student chooses a trusted adult, and parents can communicate concerns with that adult. Administrators also work closely with students to strengthen relationships with parents and students. A restorative approach involves collaborating with parents and providing personalized support, even in challenging situations. For example, when a student's behavior warrants an out-of-school suspension, the administration may work with the family to find alternative consequences that align with the district code of conduct and support the family's needs.

System evaluation involves analyzing behavior and attendance data, identifying trends, and seeking feedback from students and families. This iterative process allows for continuous improvement and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of the school community.



Social Emotional Learning for Parents

Meadow Point Elementary School

Aurora, CO

In a recent survey conducted by Meadow Point Elementary's Parent Teacher Community Organization (PTCO), families identified the greatest opportunity to enhance the student's experience was around social emotional learning (SEL). The survey data was shared and reviewed by the Guiding Coalition, made up of the Principal, Assistant Principal, Instructional Coach, mental health team, and key teachers. The Guiding Coalition recognized that while families may see the need for SEL for their students, they may not always be aware of the specific and direct ways that SEL is integrated into the existing curriculum and classroom activities.

To bridge this gap, the mental health team and the community liaison created a monthly column in the principal's existing weekly newsletter. The school social worker and psychologist alternated months writing and researching topics, while the community liaison reviewed the articles to be more accessible to families. The completed articles were then sent to the principal for review and inclusion in the weekly newsletter. This process showed parents that the school values the feedback they contribute to PTCO surveys, and more importantly, demonstrated the school's commitment to partnership in an area that parents felt has the greatest opportunity to improve their student's educational experience.

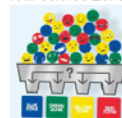
The column focused on exposing families to the SEL that is happening at school and providing at-home resources for families to further support their students' SEL development. The initial articles focused on defining social emotional learning, introducing the mental health team, and then continued with various SEL skills such as the Zones of Regulation, mindfulness meditation, etc. Specific exercises and SEL practices teachers did in the classroom were highlighted in the ongoing SEL article series. Each article concluded with a link for additional resources or tips for how to practice at home.

The nature of this communication is one-way, so it was difficult to evaluate its effectiveness at meeting the initial goal. There is data available about the number of clicks the newsletter received and its overall viewership, but nothing specific to the SEL articles themselves.

In replicating the practice, it would be worthwhile to collect the SEL classroom activities at the initial planning stage when enthusiasm is at its highest, and then use this collection of activities to drive article content throughout the year. Another way to improve the practice would be to build in two-way dialogue with the families about what they learned or practiced from the SEL articles or what additional questions they might have. If there is enough interest, a discussion group of parents wanting to talk further about SEL could be created and certainly, a follow up survey to see if SEL still remains the topic of greatest opportunity to improve student's experience.

What are the Zones of Regulation?

Meadow Point Elementary uses several strategies to promote self-regulation in order to maximize learning time. One strategy that Meadow Point uses is the Zones of Regulation curriculum, as well as other social emotional curriculum as needed. The Zones of Regulation provides an easy way to think and talk about how we feel on the inside and sorts emotions into four colored Zones, blue, all of which are expected in life.



Feelings are complicated. They come in different sizes, intensities, and levels of energy that are unique within our brains and bodies. To make them easier to talk about, think about, and regulate, The Zones of Regulation organizes our feelings, states of alertness, and energy levels into four colored Zones – Blue, Green, Yellow, and Red. The simple, common language and visual structure of The Zones of Regulation helps make the complex skill of regulation more concrete for learners and those who support them. We learn to regulate our Zones to meet our goals and task demands, as well as support our overall well-being.

Black Excellence Plan

Columbine Elementary School

Denver, CO

Columbine Elementary School has a long history in Denver educating Black students with its first building, a one room schoolhouse, built in the 1880s. Now one block south of the original location, the school honors its legacy of educating Black students through the Black Excellence Plan. The goal of the [Black Excellence Plan](#) was to ensure Black students at Columbine felt a sense of belonging and empowerment throughout their academic and social emotional learning. This will lead to a decrease in chronic absenteeism among Black students.



Black Excellence Plan

OUR AIM

To create the conditions in which our Black students experience belonging and feel empowered by the explicit evidence of Black Excellence throughout their academic and social emotional learning. This will result in our Black students decreasing their percent of chronic absenteeism to 50%. By creating this sense of belonging, all of our Black students will be able to identify positive relationships with staff members.

To ensure rigorous and relevant instruction that builds Black student agency in growth and data. By creating this agency, our Black students in K-3 will increase their percent meeting or exceeding expectations by 10% from 22-23.

This plan was developed by school staff members, parents, community members, and students and led by the principal. The initial plan was started in 2022. Prior to the start of the school year the principal held a meeting open to the community to develop a plan. School history, neighborhood history, the DPS Black Excellence Resolution, and School performance stats, were reviewed and evaluated to create a plan tailored to Columbine's needs and goals. This plan was refined in 2023 by parents, community members and staff. It was then taken to the 4th and 5th graders for input and buy-in. Columbine partnered with an East High School Black Men/Students group to come and meet with

students and discuss concerns. The school held multiple meetings for students and parents to attend and discuss issues and a plan.

The plan stated that Black families will have a voice in policy and decision-making systems by ensuring the school is eliciting Black family representation in all stakeholder groups. Events will be planned with accessibility of time, childcare, and communication preferences in mind. To support an atmosphere of belonging for Black students, students will have access to content that represents Black leaders and Black excellence. School leaders will support ongoing professional learning of restorative practices as a response to behavior and discipline. Teachers will be given strategies to encourage belonging of Black students, including pronouncing names correctly, getting to know Black students in their class, presenting Black history and culture in ways that are affirming, presenting diversity within the Black aesthetic, and ensuring Black students are not the spokespeople for the Black community. By uplifting Black students so they feel seen, heard, and valued, Black students will identify positive relationships with staff members and attend school regularly. The Black Excellence Plan provided guidance on creating conditions and mindsets that support this.

A major challenge to developing this plan was reaching family members to ensure representation in meetings where the Black Excellence Plan at Columbine was being developed. To replicate this practice, schools must meet the challenge of representation with determination, care, and personal outreach.

Escuela para Padres

Durango School District 9-R

Durango, CO

Escuela para Padres was launched in Durango 9-R to support Spanish-speaking families in better understanding school resources, programs, and practices and to increase their engagement. The goal of Escuela para Padres is to positively transform the future of children and youth, improving their present through intelligent, informed and conscious family education.

Escuela para Padres was organized and implemented as a joint effort between the Parent Liaison and Principals of both Park Elementary and Escalante Middle School. Together, they were responsible for planning monthly meetings, personally inviting families, and arranging guest speakers from the school district, community organizations, and the local college.

Staff survey parents about topics they would like to learn more about and issues they are having with their children or in their own lives. Sessions were chosen based on parents' concerns and interests as well as addressing topics that help demystify the U.S. school system. The intent is always to provide parents with information and practical tools to be proactive participants in their children's academic success and personal growth. Based on these planning inputs, ninety-minute Escuela para Padres sessions were held each month, with the host location alternating between the two schools.



Each session started with a presentation. Parents had the opportunity to ask related questions, share ideas, and actively participate. School principals have used these gatherings to host problem solving sessions with Spanish-speaking families. To increase access and welcome families, interpretation, childcare, and dinner were provided at every session. Topics have included understanding the school system, leadership, English language acquisition, Special Education, bullying and cyberbullying, drugs, emotional regulation and health, positive parenting, school safety, chronic absences, college scholarship workshops, and how to monitor your child's grades and attendance.

The program was evaluated by gathering regular parent feedback through surveys and parent interviews as well as tracking parent participation levels. Qualitative data demonstrated that parents were deeply satisfied with this program. Additionally, parent participation has continued to remain strong. While the results were positive, there have been challenges. At times it was difficult to locate a guest speaker for certain topics suggested by parents. Also, holding sessions in the evening, while helpful for parents, meant that families attended after a hard day's work.

To implement an Escuela para Padres program, Durango 9-R advises districts to learn about their families' various cultures and educational systems of the different countries. This enables the district to share information tailored to their families. Critical to success was also actively involving families in choosing topics so that their needs were met and they felt heard and valued. Personal outreach to families was also key to success.

Speaking to the success of the program, Escalante Middle School principal Emily Moreland shared that, "The addition of Escuela Para Padres in our school has dramatically increased the number of our multilingual families participating in conferences and school events. It helps to break down walls and build a sense of community with traditionally underserved populations."

Guiding Students in Foster Care to Higher Ed

Greeley-Evans District 6

Greeley, CO



The goal of this practice was to deepen student connection to outside organizations providing support and increase motivation, post-secondary educational attainment, and career readiness in students in foster care. Graduation rates for students in foster care are of high concern as this population historically has the lowest graduation rates of most highly mobile student populations.

A number of parties were involved in supporting students to help them maintain school of origin (home school when changing foster care placements), map early graduation, or envision post-secondary education as a possibility by connecting them with [FosterEd](#), new state legislation that supports the total cost of higher education for individuals who entered foster care in Colorado. Such a process involved a liaison under the [Educational Stability Grant](#) working with any interested students directly, their school counselor, front office staff, and an outside navigator from CDHE in assisting interested students in understanding how to reach post-graduation career goals.

Students could meet with the district liaison on an as-needed basis for school supplies and other support throughout the year. After the student met with their school counselor to plan early graduation (if applicable), the counselor would refer back to the same liaison to connect with interested students about college funding options. The liaison met with interested students to discuss FosterEd and informed them of their rights to access this benefit. The student(s) and liaison met with the FosterEd CDHE navigator to further discuss the process of applying and accessing funding. Students were able to focus on academic performance after seeing post-secondary options were in reach.

Success will ultimately be determined by future data points including students' successful graduation and whether they are able to access the FosterEd funding or not. Challenges in implementing this guidance included a general lack of knowledge at the secondary level about FosterEd or options that exist for students in foster care for post-secondary funding (such as marking certain questions on FAFSA to indicate their status) as well as high anxiety from students about whether this option truly would follow through to support their needs.

Those looking to implement this practice to guide students in foster care in their districts to post-secondary education should keep in mind the emotional concerns of students and their need for reassurance that this is a viable, established, and reliable option for them. Also, consider tracking at the district level whether students in foster care take advantage of FosterEd as this could be shared in work groups or listening sessions on this issue and would help advocate for similar benefits for youth at the state or local level in the future. Finally, having a dedicated liaison or point of contact to guide the student through the process is beneficial as it helps reduce confusion for the student in accessing sources of support. It was highly beneficial to have a team of school-based and outside experts working to support interested students.

Robust Support in Early Childhood Entry Points

Colorado Springs Schools D11

Colorado Springs, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

The District 11 Early Childhood Education program is committed to building an ecosystem of support for families of young children, and creating systems to remove barriers that can impact access to early childhood services and supports. Enrolling a child in school often can be overwhelming for parents, especially when navigating the additional complexity and anxiety associated with undergoing an evaluation for special education services. To improve ease of access through robust and varied communication, simplified processes, and emphasis on building human connections as a part of the process, District 11 employed a variety of support practices.



This was a collaborative effort of the Director of the Early Childhood program and the Early Childhood Community Liaison working proactively with Child Find Coordinators.

Communication regarding next-steps, appointment reminders, and how to reach out with questions was provided to families in their preferred language via email, text messages, and phone calls. When the Early Childhood Education Office, or the family, identified a need for increased support, the Community Liaison provided more direct support through either home visits or in-office appointments. During these in-person meetings, the Community Liaison provided the technology and the step-by-step support to ensure the necessary processes were successfully completed. Interpreters were always included when appropriate.

One parent shared, "I would like to commend your staff on the hospitality and kindness they offered to myself and my daughter during the evaluation process for early development and IEP placement." Another shared that although she was initially overwhelmed with the process and the amount of people in the room, she quickly realized they were focusing on her daughter as a whole child and she now feels like she has a team supporting both family and child.

When a higher layer of support is needed for families experiencing apprehension as a barrier, or who need answers to more technical questions regarding the evaluation process, a meeting with the Child Find Coordinator was offered. From D11's perspective, the primary intention of meetings with the Child Find Coordinator was to build trust between families and the district, empower families to feel confident in supporting the needs of their child, and reduce any anxiety related to engaging in the special education evaluation process.

FET/PTO Community Building Team

Fireside Elementary School

Louisville, CO



The goal of the FET/PTO Community Building Team was to bring FET ([Families & Educators Together](#)) and PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization) together in a project that would benefit the whole community by forging stronger connections between a diverse array of families.

The leaders of FET and PTO met to discuss initial ideas and then shared with each team. A meeting was held with those who were interested in joining the FET/PTO Community Building Team. They discussed what they wanted to accomplish and set a plan moving forward. A webpage was created on the FET and PTO websites, where they could document ideas, collaborate, and share essential documents.



The FET/PTO Community Building Team settled on three goals for the year:

1. Develop the [Ambassadors Program](#) by matching new families to established families as a source of support and information, and an avenue of connection. This program puts FET families into leadership positions, connects them with PTO, and helps make the school community stronger and more welcoming to all new families. This program also works to break down language or cultural barriers that exist for some families.
2. Create structures for more opportunities for families to connect with one another outside of school. A volunteer from each grade level sent out an invitation for all parents to join a WhatsApp grade level chat group. Through the app, caregivers in the same grade could ask questions about grade level/school happenings, share information about exciting things happening in the community, or share invitations to connect.
3. Creating more social engagement opportunities for families outside of school. Events were planned and advertised at FET meetings, in the school newsletter, and with School Messenger email/text notifications. Some examples of events are parents' night out or family events at the climbing gym or roller-skating rink.

The FET/PTO Community Building Team was evaluated by the amount of participation and feedback that was collected from participants. The Team did receive positive feedback, but participation was limited. They hope that voicing these positive experiences will encourage more participation next year and in years to come. In addition, they did not start this new practice until partway through the school year. They hope to start the new school year with more momentum and direction, resulting in more participation and creating a more substantial effect on the community.

For those wanting to replicate this practice, it is recommended to consider the barriers that might prevent people from participating. For example, when people first move to a new place, they are often overwhelmed and may not respond to an invitation to connect. It is helpful to reach out on multiple occasions, with the caveat that it is acceptable to decline the invitation. It is also important to consider the language or cultural barrier that may exist for some families. Matching families with similar language or cultural backgrounds will help with the success of the program.

The D51 Family & Community Partnership Roadmap

District 51

Grand Junction, CO

The D51 Family and Community Partnership Roadmap was designed to elevate the district's efficacy in providing high impact family partnership opportunities to the community by fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and excellence in a way that fully embraces the dual capacity-building framework. The roadmap is essentially a strategic plan for co-creating authentic partnerships with D51 families and community members, which is a critical component of the overall District 51 Strategic Plan.



The Colorado Education Initiative facilitated the process to develop this tool. The actual plan was crafted by an exceptional community task force made up of dedicated D51 staff, representatives from diverse community organizations, and invested parents, including monolingual Spanish speaking parents. Co-creation was at the heart of this initiative. The 27-member task force aligned its work with goals outlined in D51's strategic plan.

At its core, the roadmap delineates three strategic objectives meticulously designed to empower the community with a robust framework for family and community partnership. First and foremost, the task

force strove to elevate communication channels, ensuring clarity, transparency, and accessibility for all stakeholders. Secondly, the group endeavored to enhance the capacity of D51 staff, equipping them with the tools and knowledge necessary to effectively serve families and forge symbiotic relationships with the broader community. Finally, the task force made recommendations to fortify the very foundation of the district: the cultivation of enduring partnerships with families, grounded in trust, respect, and mutual support.

The roadmap is a 5-year strategic plan with metrics that are designed to be measured and updated on an annual basis. The district holds quarterly meetings with this taskforce to provide updates on progress made and to gain insight and recommendations for making adjustments along the way. So far, the biggest challenge has been determining how to integrate family engagement professional development into the school year. Another challenge has been to allocate sufficient resources, both human and financial, toward ensuring the effort is sustainable.

Advice for replicating the practice is to 1) ensure the professional learning department is involved and planning to support the implementation of the staff learning necessary to make it successful; 2) ensure you have bilingual, bicultural staff and families involved in the co-creation and implementation of the work; and 3) collect qualitative data from stakeholders throughout the process and share it with key community leaders.

The Family Advocacy Program

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO

The Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Department at Denver Public Schools (DPS) launched a new program this year, The Family Advocacy Program. The goal was to support schools with engagement practices and to empower families to have stronger voices in their schools/communities. To start, FACE selected eight Title I schools, one from each region of Denver, and surveyed parents at those school sites on what they want to learn, along with how and when. Over four months, there were two monthly meetings which hosted engagement support chats for school-based staff and monthly Parent Village Advocacy Trainings for 1-2 parents and a school representative from each school site.



Jasmine Rigby, Title I Specialist, researched advocacy and engagement to develop this program. Denver Public Schools is made up of 207 schools, 155 of which are Title I. The goal was to find a way to equitably provide resources, identify the similarities and differences in needs of families and school staff district-wide, and begin building family advocates across the district to help drive engagement work forward.

Through 150 surveys collected, FACE heard families advocating for academic support, homework help, and improved communication with their school. This led to the engagement chats, where they dove into many topics such as improving communication strategies, newcomer family support, building investment within schools, and event planning. The monthly parent/school leader meetings were based on [Building a Parent Nation: The Parent Village Toolkit](#) that educates families on their advocacy style to address parent needs in their communities. At each session, a new community partner spoke on topics that arose during sessions like advocacy, disability supports, and mental health.

Each session was evaluated using a brief survey. These surveys helped the district rapidly implement feedback by asking what else parents want to learn, and building those topics into future sessions. A major challenge was transportation. Because FACE partnered with one school per region, schools felt times were too busy to sustain coming to in-person meetings. However, the closing survey indicated that schools that maintained parent participation through the initiative want to implement parent villages at their school sites next year. To address the transportation issue, FACE plans to launch this program region-by-region with a new goal of building strong relationships between neighboring schools. They will also simplify curriculum and shorten the length of the program to one month, running the eight sessions on a weekly basis. This should increase longevity in school participation, provide time for schools to apply what they learn, and create opportunities for more schools to participate each year.

A few tips to consider if you plan on running a similar program at your school: 1) consistent communication is key, 2) check in on families and schools regularly, 3) provide personalized resources they truly want and can access easily, and 4) thank them for showing up, every time!

UIP Family Engagement Playbook

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO

During the 23-24 school year, staff in Denver Public Schools created the first [UIP Family Engagement Playbook](#). This initiative was a group effort led by DPS' School & Unified Improvement Planning department and the Family and Community Engagement (FACE) team. The goal of this playbook is to provide school leaders with a guide on how to engage and share power with their families during the UIP process. The playbook provides background on the importance of family participation in improvement planning and three different ways that schools could go about engaging their families: 1) creating a UIP family task force, 2) conducting empathy interviews, and 3) administering family surveys.

The playbook begins by explaining why diverse perspectives from families are important in the improvement planning process. Throughout the playbook, leaders are provided with many tools and resources including mock agendas, before/during/after meeting checklists, meeting best practices, family outreach strategies, and more. Leaders are also given templates and tips on learning new skills around empathy interviews, developing

effective surveys, and analyzing survey results. The playbook concludes with additional resources that the FACE team can provide to schools including consultation support, slideshow templates, an event planning toolkit, and more.

The playbook received high praise when the School & Unified Improvement Planning Manager shared it with school staff in February 2024. Because the playbook is such a new resource, the plan is to follow-up with school leaders to learn more about what was most helpful and what could be improved for the next year. The biggest challenge throughout the creation of this playbook was creating low-lift, high-impact strategies to share with school leaders.

For any district wanting to create their own UIP Family Engagement Playbook, be sure to think about which parts of the UIP process makes sense for families to be engaged and create resources and tools for school leaders that are easy and ready to use. Also, do not be afraid to include other experts along the way to provide material and feedback prior to creating the final version.



Community Hubs

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO

The Community Hubs initiative in Denver Public Schools (DPS) promotes a holistic approach to student - learning. The Hubs provide programs and services that support students' social, emotional, physical, and academic growth while also supporting families experiencing food insecurity.

This initiative was a collaborative effort between the Denver mayor, DPS superintendent, other DPS leadership, DPS's FACE office, various community partners, families, and national partners. DPS worked with each identified community to build out the services most aligned to their needs. Community Hubs are dedicated to promoting equity and inclusion in DPS's communities. The Community Hubs celebrates diversity while addressing the unique needs of community members.

To ensure inclusivity, the hubs provide physical accessibility, language accommodations, and support for diverse learning styles and abilities. DPS values representation and empowered individuals from marginalized groups to participate in and lead the programs. This initiative linked to improved student outcomes, positive school climate, and overall school improvement by providing essential services, fostering community engagement, and ensuring sustainability and scalability of the model.

Community Hubs are part of the school district strategy roadmap; therefore, they were evaluated through goals that have been implemented every year since launching. During this program year, Community Hubs offered services to more than 3,000 families in the community. Over 600 parents took ESL classes, 52 parents graduated through the GED program, over 80 parents in the community were supported with employment, and three grocery markets were launched over the past year and a half. Challenges, such as aligning resources with community needs, were addressed to ensure DPS was working closely with other community centers to not duplicate services but rather work together to better serve not only DPS families but the entire Denver community.



For those aspiring to replicate the practice, the key elements to focus on are strong leadership support and ensuring that parent engagement is seen as a collective responsibility. As emphasized by participants involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating the practice, the success of Community Hubs hinged on these foundational pillars. One partner noted, "Community Hubs are changing lives," highlighting the profound impact of these initiatives. Another staff member shared, "The path is not easy but is the most rewarding job I have ever had in my life," indicating that while the journey may be challenging, the outcomes are immensely fulfilling.

Additionally, a parent reflected on their personal experience, saying, "It's not just about advancing in my education, but it's the first place where I was part of a community, the first time I felt I had a support system." This underscores the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive environment where individuals feel connected and valued.

Community Room Resources

Summit Elementary School

Aurora, CO

When a survey revealed the need for food and clothing resources in their community, Summit Elementary School jumped on the opportunity to provide a pantry and closet for the very first time in their Community Room.

The Principal, Assistant Principal, Community Liaison, and front office were the foundation in making this possible. The Community Liaison and the School Support Para renovated and organized designated spaces in the Community Room for the pantry and community closet. The district played a vital role in providing shelving for the pantry, which was essential for organizing the donated food, and the Office Manager was able to find funds to purchase shelving for the closet. Summit partnered with Eastern Hills Community Church to establish the pantry and the ARC thrift store provided vouchers to help fill the closet. Summit has also received donations from local organizations such as ViBE and We Don't Waste that help keep the pantry and closet stocked.



Since launching the pantry and closet, Summit has successfully provided families with food boxes for every break during the school year and daily snacks for students in need. Over the holidays, ViBE helped make food boxes for our families. Students have also volunteered in the community room and helped put boxes together for families. The school also brought in the program “Blessings in a Bag,” designed to provide non-perishable food every week for kids to take home over the weekend. Summit has worked closely with the district pantry and has been a part of a weekly grocery donation through a church that donates to the Cherry Creek School District. Generous donations from staff and the community have poured in throughout the year.

The initial survey helped identify which families in the Summit community could benefit from these added resources. The pantry and closet in the Community Room is available for all students and families to utilize, if they need. The Summit Community Room has been a relief and comfort for families receiving the added support and resources. One parent sent a message to Summit saying, “Thank you for always looking out for people like me and my kids! Just know your support and caring attention will forever be appreciated. God bless you.”

Although the new resources have been successful at Summit Elementary, they also presented some challenges. These included insufficient culturally appropriate food, proper delivery of food for families without transportation, receiving expired food, and running low on weather-specific clothing.

Advice to replicate a program like this is to connect and build relationships among community members and partners. These relationships will create a deeper understanding of what is needed and how to accomplish meeting those needs for students and families.

Culinary Club

Eagle County School District

Eagle, CO

To refresh and reinvigorate YouthPower365 (YP365) Middle School Afterschool Explorers programming, staff conducted a student survey to understand interests. Cooking was an overwhelming favorite student interest, and the concept of Culinary Club was created.

The Culinary Club coordinator position drew the interest of a local executive chef, Santosh Koradi. He envisioned the engagement of middle school students in the culinary arts to involve their families; consider affordable, healthier eating practices; grow confidence; build community; and introduce students to a future career. He guided the curriculum development, as well as weekly lesson plans and meals. The YouthPower365 staff connected with the local food pantry, The Community Market, to provide many of the ingredients.



Culinary Club meets once a week at each of Eagle County's four middle schools for two hours after school. The program models and teaches safe cooking skills to allow the students to prepare the weekly recipe. In some cases, the students have provided ideas for recipes that they would like to cook. Other times, family members attend as a "guest chef" and teach the class a recipe important to their family. Students learn about other cultures and family traditions, as well as find pride in sharing their own culture and traditions. Each semester ends in a Family Dinner, where students cook a 3-course meal to demonstrate their learnings, and families are invited to join together in community and celebration.

In the Spring of 2024, families of the students enrolled in each Culinary Club were invited to an offsite community organization to learn to cook a new recipe. Most ingredients were provided by The Community Market, and each family left with a bag of groceries. One of the middle school counselors noted, "Students are able to directly link the skills they learn with their real world and showed a strong sense of pride in their accomplishments at the first Family Dinner event."

At the beginning and end of the school year, students in Culinary Club were given the [Survey of Academic & Youth Outcomes – Youth Survey](#) to assess overall program experience, future expectations, sense of competence, and program impacts. Additionally, the program underwent an [Assessment of Program Practices Tool](#) observation to assess the effectiveness of student outcomes in the areas of learning and skill building, program organization and structure, and supportive social environment. Teachers and staff who organize and facilitate the program, as well as families of enrolled students, were also surveyed and met with at the end of the school year. Changes were made for the next school year based on these surveys and in-person meetings.

Challenges included low student participation at certain times of the school year due to other after school sports and activities. Managing student behaviors was also a challenge at times, but often turned into an opportunity to strengthen relationships with families.

To replicate the Culinary Club, consider the assets within your community. Communicate the initial idea and engage culinary expertise for implementation as well as a connection to further learning and possible careers.

Library Night for Spanish-Speaking Families

Poudre School District

Poudre, CO

During October parent/teacher conferences, many Poudre School District parents had to sign a READ plan for their child because their child was below grade level in reading. The READ plan had four strategies that parents should be using at home to support their child in improving their child's reading skills. These strategies included reading with their child daily, in English as well as in their home language, and listening to fluent reading through audiobooks. Most of the Spanish-speaking parents acknowledged they didn't know where to find books in their native language, as well as audiobooks. The family liaison identified this need and communicated with the local public library. The library has a bilingual librarian who agreed to have a collaborative event for families at the library to introduce them to the library card and all the services available.



Together with three other family liaisons, whose schools are near this library, they had an event where families came to the library for light refreshments, a presentation of services available, a tour of the library, and a family activity. After the presentation, the group was divided in half. The first group visited the library, guided by the bilingual staff member. The second group stayed and participated in the activity. The activity involved decorating reusable canvas bags for them to use when borrowing library books to take home. Participants of all ages were excited and proud to have painted their own book bags. There were small children, teens, and parents painting their own bags. Then the groups switched for the library visit and activity.

The event was successful, and parents received library cards. They were amazed at all the services the card included. They were especially grateful to learn about the study rooms that can be reserved and the photocopies that can be made for free. They expressed interest in the books that read out loud, resources in Spanish for children and adults, and those that come in a preloaded format, as well as in the themed backpack kits.

The library website has not been completely translated and there are some areas that are difficult to navigate for those who don't have English competency. This was a bit challenging. Additionally, registration was limited due to the size of the room, the size of the groups for the tour, and the materials available for the activity.

For those who would like to replicate this practice, have the parents download the apps for the audiobooks on the spot, so they can give them a try and see how they really work. Also, arrange for the young children to go to a separate location and have books read to them while the parents are at the presentation.

Introducing Spanish-speaking families to the services available at the public library is a way to create an inclusive culture because many of these families don't know that these services are free and available to them. Partnering with families in activities that build their capacity to help improve educational outcomes is a way to build trusting and positive relationships.

Newcomer Family Nights

Edgewater Elementary School

Edgewater, CO

Edgewater has always been recognized for its diversity and inclusiveness with its students and families. They make it a priority to provide each and every one of their students the care and support needed to excel to their greatest potential. This year, Edgewater Elementary School received approximately 60 newcomers from different countries. These families faced enormous challenges of all kinds. The goal of the practice was to provide the newcomer families with resources that included information about healthcare, food, housing, clothing drives, and more. Staff also helped families with registering their children in preschool, elementary, middle, and high school.

It took the help and effort of the whole team to implement and plan this practice. This ranges from the school's family liaison, principal, staff, volunteers, and the community members. In preparation for these events, the family liaison invited multiple community members to provide resources. Tables and chairs were set up in the gym for each resource provider. Resources included food banks, nutrition services, Jeffco police department, Jeffco public library, vaccinations, preschool coordinators, legal advice, job opportunities, recreation center, Jeffco homeless resources, Family Response Service Team, and more.

Clothing was a big need for many families. The team coordinated a large clothing and shoe drive, so families could choose the clothes they needed while at the event. They also received other donated necessities such as blankets, diapers, and personal hygiene items. Food was provided at the event and families could take home bags from the food bank. Teachers, staff, and PTA volunteers were invited to support the event.



These events improved the school climate because families were able to access the support they needed. They helped the school staff begin to connect with the new families and better understand the challenges they faced. Welcoming the newcomer families in this way helped integrate them into the Edgewater community. Learning about US culture, services, and opportunities laid the foundation for newcomers to lead full lives and contribute to society in positive ways.

This practice was evaluated by observing how many families were involved and how many were able to obtain resources. As this practice was carefully planned, it was very successful, and they did not face any challenges. Having lots of volunteers from the school community helped make all of this possible.

One of the most important aspects of an event like this is reaching out to the families in multiple ways so that they attend the event. In this case, Edgewater Elementary sent a flyer home to families, sent multiple robocalls, and made personal phone calls to each family. It was also critical to invite families in person before or after school, and to explain to them what the event was and why it was important that they attend. The families trust Edgewater's family liaison and felt comfortable attending the event.

Newcomer Resource Fair

Adams 12 Five Star Schools

Thornton, CO

In Adams 12 Five Star Schools, the goal of the Newcomer Resource Fair was to connect recently arrived families with direct access to many of the organizations and resources that they most often request. This event was inspired by the influx of newcomer students and families the district welcomed over the course of the school year. Many of the district's school-based family liaisons were being asked questions that they didn't know the answers to or were unsure where to refer their families to. By hosting a Newcomer Resource Fair, families recognized that their needs were being heard and responded to in a meaningful way.

A small team was formed that included district staff from various departments, including MTSS, Mental Health, Post-Secondary, Counseling, Student Engagement Initiatives, and Communications. Far more people and community partners were involved with the implementation of this practice, including district Safety & Security, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education, A Precious Child, Thornton Community Connections, and more.



The planning team contacted various partner organizations from around the state that newly arrived families could benefit from being connected to. This ranged from post-secondary specialists to help with FAFSA/CAFSA applications, a family engagement specialist from USCIS, Casa de Paz, to after school programming options and access to medical and dental care. Ultimately, Adams 12 had 38+ organizations in attendance and over 350 attendees.

Adams 12 collected feedback from partner organizations, event attendees, and event staff. The feedback from all stakeholders was overwhelmingly positive, with most of the corrective feedback being related to the need for access to even more resources and to host events like this more often.

Events of this scale include many challenges along the way. Some of the challenges included the allowability of using golf carts to transport families to remove transportation barriers, the intensive communication plan necessary for district events, providing materials and interpreters in multiple languages, and coordinating that support with attendees during the fair.

The best advice to replicate this event is to just do it. Taking a leap of faith in the name of creating inclusive and welcoming environments for families will always be worth it.

School CAFÉs: Engaging Community Partners

Jeffco Public Schools

Golden, CO

In 2024, Jeffco schools began a partnership with [SchoolConnectAZ](#) to train schools to host CAFÉ (Community and Family Engagement) meetings to strengthen partnerships between schools and local community organizations. A CAFÉ is a round table conversation between a school principal and the local leaders of their community, in which the partners work together to address the needs of neighborhood children and families. The goal of a CAFÉ is to bring partners around the table to help address school needs, as they relate to student achievement, school culture, staff retention, and family engagement.

District leadership met with SchoolConnectAZ to learn more about their process, then visited Harrison School District 2 in Colorado Springs to observe their districtwide CAFÉ co-hosted with [COSILoveYou](#). They then partnered with Lumberg Elementary in November to prototype a CAFÉ in Jeffco. At that meeting, 12 businesses, faith-based organizations, service clubs, and nonprofits gathered to learn about the priorities of the Lumberg school community and sign up for various opportunities to support. Building off the energy of that night, a School Champion was designated to keep partners engaged and Lumberg hosted two more CAFÉs in February and May.



During a CAFÉ, community partners from all sectors meet with a principal and their school team and share a meal. The principal then shares their priorities and calendar and names specific areas where community partners can contribute their time, talent, and treasure. As community partners identify opportunities to support, they commit right then and there.

Following the success at Lumberg, Jeffco shared the opportunity with other school leaders from around the district and hosted a 3-day training in June 2024 using central funds. The training built the capacity of the participating schools to recruit School Champions, asset map their community partners, and host CAFÉs and other catalytic community engagement events such as “Love Our Schools Day.”

The success of the CAFÉ is evaluated through regular surveys, feedback sessions, and analysis of key performance indicators such as staff turnover rates, student attendance, and academic performance. As Jeffco expands CAFÉs to more schools, there will be challenges with coordinating schedules to ensure consistent participation from all community partners, as well as maintaining momentum and ensuring follow-through on action items by community partners. School champions will be crucial to keep all partners fully engaged.

For those looking to replicate the CAFÉ initiative, it is advised to start small with a school community that already has many invested community partners. The success of the initiative will rely on genuine partnerships. It is also essential to be adaptable and responsive to feedback, ensuring that the initiative evolves to meet the changing needs of the school community. Finally, maintaining consistent communication and celebrating small wins will help sustain engagement and drive long-term success.

Spanish Classes for Students

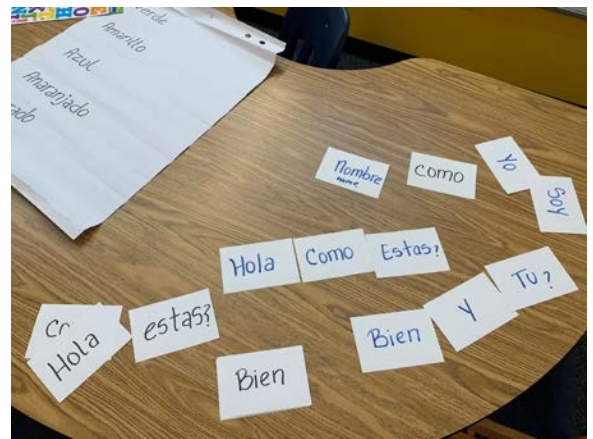
Mesa Elementary School

Boulder, CO

Mesa Elementary School started the year with big ideas! One of those ideas was born out of the recognition that language acquisition is an incredibly valuable skill that enhances cognitive development, improving problem-solving skills, memory, and creativity. It also enables better communication and understanding of different cultures, fostering empathy and social integration, to name just a few. The Families and Educators Together (FET) Team was moved by the question, “How can we bring Spanish to our school now?”

Even though the idea of Spanish classes was initiated by FET families, they surveyed the rest of the school to gauge interest. A total of 50 families out of 241 responded positively. One family referred Mesa Principal Josh Baldner to local language school Boulder Spanish, and a program was designed with them to implement in the second semester. This planning took about one month.

The 2023-2024 Spanish offering at Mesa was composed of six classes over 12 weeks, divided by day, time, grade, and language level. The contract with Boulder Spanish outlined that they would use Mesa’s facilities and manage all communication with families. One of the FET leaders supervised how the program was running, observed the classes, and kept a close dialogue with the Spanish teachers. This ongoing dialogue was crucial in making sure teachers understood the dynamics and needs of elementary level students, as well as solving real concerns around neurodiverse students in their classroom and how to better support them. The result was a productive partnership that allowed Mesa to adjust strategy, materials, and content along the way, designing a program that was engaging and successful for the Introductory level of Spanish, as well as reinforcing and deepening skills at the Intermediate level. After each class, teachers communicated directly with parents describing what was covered as well as offering electronic options for homework. After observing most of the classes, the FET team was able to determine that, in general, the students found the content exciting, were able to interact with vocabulary many times, and overall had a great time.



Throughout the program, the FET team kept a close eye on how the program was running. For example, they spoke directly with some of the parents about how their children were feeling about Spanish, if they were using the materials at home, and how they felt going to the classes. At the end of the program, families completed a short survey for Boulder Spanish. The results of the survey were very positive, with most families sharing they would like to continue in the next school year, some wishing there were more printed options for homework, and overall observing their children had shown progress after the completion of the program.

Mesa Elementary considered this first implementation a success. Looking ahead to 2024-2025, Mesa expects to offer Spanish classes again, ideally working again with Boulder Spanish, though refining content and focusing on conversation and more cultural exposure to the language.

The Big 3 (TB3) Community Bingo

Jeffco Public Schools

Wheat Ridge, CO

The idea for The Big Three (TB3) Community Bingo began with a desire to help Wheat Ridge families know the three big learning goals their child was expected to achieve by the end of the school year. The goal was to create an activity for families to do together around TB3 learning, while creating a sense of belonging in both the school and the community.

TB3 Community Bingo was centered around the idea that strong communities make strong schools. The Family Engagement Liaisons (FELs) from three Wheat Ridge elementary schools and the middle school came up with the idea. They collaborated with the [Wheat Ridge Coalition](#), as well as the Wheat Ridge Chamber of Commerce to help spread the word and secure the participation of eight local businesses and organizations, who were able to participate for a small donation. The donation went to the community celebration at the end of the program.

Bingo sheets were created by the FEL team based on learning objectives and sent home to families at the beginning of April. They had one month to complete the bingo. Five of the spaces on the bingo sheet were 'Community Challenge' spaces. These were spaces where the families chose a community partner to visit, completed the challenge, and received a sticker for that spot on their bingo card. Each participating 'Community Challenge' business and organization had a TB3 poster in their window. The poster had a QR code that led to a specific form for that business location. Questions on the form were grade-level appropriate based on learning goals. The student then went into the business or organization and gave the answer verbally to receive a sticker for their bingo sheet.

There was no cost for families for any of the TB3 Community Bingo activities and some activities were available along the bus line. There was one way to get bingo that did not require completing a community challenge. A completed bingo sheet meant a free entrance ticket to the community celebration. The celebration in 2024 was a Ninja Nation course set up in a central location in the community. As an extra challenge, if a student completed all five community challenge squares, they also received a Fast Pass, so they didn't have to wait in line for the Ninja Nation course.

After the event, an evaluation survey was sent to all participating families. A separate form was sent to participating businesses and organizations. Approximately 100 families participated in TB3 Community Bingo. Ideas for next year include increasing the number of families who participate, communicating about and increasing excitement for the project before it starts, ensuring all the community partners are visited on a more equal basis, and better maximizing the content to align with grade level goals.

To replicate this practice, visit potential partners in person to start to form a relationship and to see the business location. Be flexible with the needs of the community partners. Make sure all materials are consistent, professional, and translated.



Trashion Show – An Earth Day Celebration

Northglenn Middle School

Northglenn, CO

The goal of the Trashion Show - An Earth Day Celebration is to bring families and students together to learn about Adams 12 Five Star Schools conservation efforts while building community through a shared creative experience.

The Family Outreach Liaison collaborated with district sustainability staff to organize the informational part of this event. The liaison also contacted community partners to obtain the materials that were to be repurposed for the creative element. Other school staff who are passionate about sustainability and family engagement also helped with the event.

At the start of the Trashion Show, district sustainability staff presented information on how Adams 12 engages in conservation/repurposing efforts on a district scale. Families discussed with each other and their children how they might replicate some of those practices at the school and home level. Parents and their children then co-created creative outfits from repurposed recyclable materials. Materials that were repurposed included plastic grocery bags, floral decor made in art classes that were recycled after use, rope, yarn, cardboard rolls from paper towels, and more. Once completed, students walked the "catwalk" in their recycled outfits with their families as spectators. The event provided participants an opportunity to learn from each other, it connected to student learning, and was highly interactive and engaging. The planning team collected anecdotal feedback from attendees and plans to make changes accordingly for future events.



Trashion Show planners wanted to ensure that the event was intentionally linked to student learning. The Trashion Show had a direct connection to Science standards for middle school in the Earth Science category. Opening this event to the wider school community provided space for families to engage in a creative task alongside each other with their students as the experts. This built trust between families and district staff while also empowering parents as partners in their children's education.

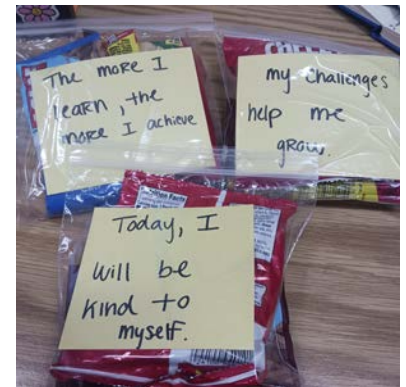
Weekend Food Packs

Sunrise Elementary School

Aurora, CO

At Sunrise Elementary School, the 2023-2024 school year marked a new beginning for the community. For the first time, Sunrise has a full-time Community Liaison. As a Title I school, it is necessary to have a support system built in for families. Sunrise has several programs to support families in need, including a school-based food/resource pantry and community closet.

In partnership with SECOR's Food for Thought outreach program, Sunrise provided families and students with weekly non-perishable food packs for the weekend. The Community Liaison and paraeducator designed a process for students with 504 or IEP plans to deliver the food packs to classrooms. These students often have breaks built into their schedules. To earn the opportunity to deliver food packs during those breaks, students had to remain on task in class and complete their work. As a result, delivering food packs served as motivation for students to participate in class, thus teaching accountability and responsibility.



Each Thursday, students selected to deliver the food packs reviewed the job responsibilities and signed the job contract. On Friday, the food packs were distributed to classrooms. Four students worked two 20-minute shifts in the morning. With direction from the Community Liaison, they loaded the cart with the correct number of food packs corresponding to the classroom, one grade level at a time. They then pushed the cart through the school to each classroom, delivered the bags to the designated location in the room, and repeated for all 21 classrooms. At the end of their shift, the students were rewarded with a snack-pack and a handwritten affirmation for the day.



For years to come, Sunrise will continue to grow the practice of selecting students for this classroom job. Next school year, the goal is to implement more structure to build upon the skills of accountability and responsibility. Students will complete a job application on paper (instead of online) and write a personal statement about why they would be the best candidate. Students will interview for the job with the Community Liaison and paraeducator. To give the opportunity to as many students as possible, different sets of students will be selected for the fall and spring.

The paraeducator shared, "This job helps students in so many ways, most importantly in taking accountability for their actions. I have seen an increase in focus and responsibility and a will to do well all week so they can get to do the job. These students feel important while doing their job and they look forward to coming to school because of that."

Welcoming and Connecting Newcomer Families

Columbine Elementary School

Boulder, CO



Columbine Elementary School

Columbine Elementary School, located in the Boulder Valley School District, welcomed more than 30 families from Mexico and Venezuela during the fall of 2023. The Families and Educators Together (FET) Team, the Parent Teacher

Association (PTA), and [Family Resource Schools](#) (FRS) collaborated to create opportunities for newcomer families to access resources and to foster relationships with members of the larger community and the school.

Three informational sessions took place throughout the second semester. The first session was focused on resources for families to meet their basic needs, such as shelter, food, clothing, and health. The school invited community organizations to participate, including El Centro Amistad, BVSD Health Services, Clinica Family Health, and Emergency Family Assistance Association (EFAA). The second session was focused on the employment process and opportunities with WorkForce Boulder County. They provided guidance on how to apply for a job, job requirements, and how to prepare for an interview. The final session focused on legal services to answer questions families had. A team from The Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder presented to the families.

Bridging Digital Divides facilitated a basic computer skills class for Columbine Elementary families to navigate the Boulder Valley School district website and parent portal. Each family received a free Chromebook.

A group of parents also created the Buenas Amigas Group. This group reached out to newcomer families and identified specific needs to start their lives in the United States. They connected with a neighborhood church to collect furniture, clothing, and food for the families. Staff were able to create a small “store” in the school for families to “shop” for free.

At the end of the school year, Columbine Elementary staff asked for feedback. The newcomer parents expressed their gratitude for all of the welcoming support they received this year. The families felt welcomed and connected to the school community.

To replicate this experience, Columbine Elementary staff recommend inviting parents from the school community to create a plan of action. As soon as possible, survey the new families to find out what their needs are.

**For more information and
partnering materials:**

SACPIE

www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie

CDE

cde.state.co.us/familyengagement

Questions

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State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education



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